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ABSTRACT

Included is a review of the current programs for teaching the principles of conservation in New York state, and recommendations for extension and development of such programs. Both the federal and state government agencies involved in conservation education are considered. A summary is presented for the facilities and programs in conservation within the State Conservation Department, State Education Department, colleges and universities, and local and regional organizations. A public hearing devoted to conservation problems is briefly summarized with recommendations for new programs, course content, resources and facilities, and teacher education. The Commission concludes with 11 unanswered questions, important for future development in conservation education and which suggest the direction for further study by the Commission. Bibliography. (PR)

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State of New York

TEMPORARY STATE COMMISSION

ON

YOUTH EDUCATION IN CONSERVATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FIRST REPORT
TO THE
GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE
ON
CONSERVATION EDUCATION

SE 009 803

MARCH 1970

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Chairman

Mr. Victor A. Fitchlee
Vice-Chairman

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Hon. Ewald B. Nyquist
Commissioner of Education

To the Hon. Nelson A. Rockefeller, Governor
Hon. Earl W. Brydges, President Pro Tem of the Senate
Hon. Perry B. Duryea, Jr., Speaker of the Assembly
Hon. Members of the Legislature of the State of New York

I am pleased to transmit this report of the Temporary State Commission on Youth Education in Conservation, in accordance with Chapter 824 of the Laws of 1969.

The inadequacies of existing programs in conservation education need no documentation. Every day the residents of New York State are confronted with evidence that too many people have not learned to be concerned about the quality of their environment. This situation must be changed.

The Commission was directed to make a study of the current programs for teaching the principles of conservation in New York State and to make recommendations for the extension and development of such programs. The Commissioner of Education, Ewald B. Nyquist, and the Commissioner of Conservation, R. Stewart Kilborne, have wholeheartedly supported and entered into the work of this Commission. Their statements and the statements of scores of interested individuals throughout New York State have confirmed what the Commission knew when it began its work -- that there are no easy answers and quick solutions to the problems of conservation education.

The Commission has worked tirelessly since it began its operation only two short months ago. The accomplishments of the Commission and the questions yet to be answered are outlined in the accompanying report.

We are grateful for the opportunity of focusing attention on this crucial issue, and we look forward to playing an important role in the search for solutions.

Respectfully yours,

Bernard C. Smith
Chairman

State of New York

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FIRST REPORT TO THE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Commission wishes to express its grateful appreciation to those who attended its hearings; to those who generously shared with the Commission their views on conservation education; to those who sent publications and other materials to the Commission; to the Staff and to those who provided the facilities in which the Commission has accomplished its work. Special thanks are extended to the youth of this State who have supported and encouraged the work of this Commission.

FIRST REPORT ON CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Nothing in the world is so powerful
as an idea whose time has come.

- from Victor Hugo

Commission Purpose

The time has come for a new emphasis on conservation education in New York State. To find out how this new emphasis can best be realized, the Temporary State Commission on Youth Education in Conservation was directed by the Legislature to make a study of the current programs for teaching the principles of conservation in New York State and to make recommendations for the extension and development of such programs. It is important to note that the Commission was not established to study the need for conservation education. The need for conservation education is apparent to all who are aware of our environmental crisis. The Commission's responsibility is that of deciding what we are going to do about this educational need.

Public Hearings

A major part of this study was accomplished by means of public hearings in five locations throughout the State. The response to these hearings, from public and private groups as well as from individuals, was gratifying to the members of the Commission. Special

efforts were made to encourage the participation of school and college students. As a result, their involvement was extensive. Many students presented statements and many others attended as observers. In some locations, entire classes attended the hearings. The Commission was impressed by their presence and by the excellence of the statements which they presented. Beyond all question, to adults and students alike, conservation education is of vital concern throughout New York State.

The source of this concern is the new awareness of man's harmful effect upon the world in which he lives. Ecology, the branch of biology concerned with the interrelationships among organisms and their environment, has come of age. Specific programs are underway or are being considered to deal piecemeal with environmental issues. Only through education and motivation, however, can man hope to achieve the long-range goal of living in harmony with his world.

Human Ecology

To consider a person's relationship with his environment is to confront the fundamental social issues of our day. One cannot separate the problems of poverty, hunger, drugs, crime, and population

from the problem of a decaying environment. For too many people, they are all part of the same cycle of misery and despair. No program of conservation education will be considered complete if it ignores this aspect of human ecology.

Traditionally, education serves the values of the society in which it exists, protects those values, and is the great stabilizing force of that society. More and more frequently in our rapidly changing world, education is called upon to lead, to be responsive to new forces, and to marshal its vast resources to meet the challenges of the present. This is the case in conservation education today, redefined in its broader perspectives as that education which "makes a person keenly aware of himself as a person, keenly aware of his environment, and keenly aware of the choices he can make in his relationship to his environment."

In addition to the new and broader definition of conservation education, a redefinition of the term "youth" was thought to be desirable for the purposes of this study. "Youth" would include all those who are unaware of their responsibilities toward their environment. A vast public must be

reached through educational media. The present environmental crisis is of such dimensions that it cannot only await a new generation to grow to maturity concerned about its responsibilities and equipped to fulfill them.

EXISTING PROGRAMS FOR CONSERVATION EDUCATION

The Commission was given information on many of the programs which currently exist in the field of conservation education in New York State. Organizations with educational programs are to be found at all levels of the public and private sectors. Some provide resource assistance for planning and curriculum development; others are directly engaged in educational activities.

National Level

On the level of Federal government, departments involved in conservation education in some way are the Departments of the Interior (Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, National Park Service), Agriculture (Soil Conservation Service, Cooperative Extension, Forest Service), and Health, Education and Welfare (Office of Education). Assistance for private conservation-oriented organizations, for community development projects, and for curriculum planning is available from these departments, all of which profess to an awakening interest in environmental education and an awareness of the present urgency.

Among the foregoing, the Cooperative Extension Service, in its 4-H Division especially, has perhaps

been the most directly involved in youth conservation education. It has utilized the resources of local, State, and Federal government units to conduct field days and teacher training programs. Almost 40,000 students from public and parochial schools were provided with field days in 1969. It has also been active in the planning of a regional, decentralized conservation center in Rockland County as a project under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Federal programs under Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have had some effect on conservation education in New York State despite funding limitations. Project R.A.C.E. (Regional Approach on Conservation in Education), sponsored by the Ilion Central School District, is another example of a Title III undertaking. Four counties are served by this project, which offers teacher workshops, resource materials, bulletins, in-service courses, and an outdoor, live-in program for students from ten to thirteen years of age at the Rogers Conservation Center in Sherburne. Year-round facilities for student overnight trips are now available and are being expanded.

Nationally, there are many non-governmental societies and associations with branches in New York State. The National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the Society of American Foresters, the Girl Scouts, and the Boy Scouts of America are only a very few from a long list. These groups have a commitment to conservation education, and many have taken steps locally to offer their resources and assistance for improving and expanding education in keeping with the new goal of achieving environmental quality. Improvement of local library material, curriculum development, and outdoor workshops are some of the many activities in which these groups have recently been engaged.

State Level

On the State level, responsibility for conservation is divided primarily between the Conservation Department and the Education Department. The Department of Health is also involved in public education on certain environmental issues. The New York State Conservation Council, the New York State Outdoor Education Association, the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Districts Association, and the New York State Fish and Wildlife Management Board are among other State groups, both public and private, with an interest in conservation education and with resources at their disposal.

Conservation Department

The New York State Conservation Department, Division of Conservation Education, provides information and education concerning all aspects of natural resource management including outdoor education and recreation. The emphasis of their program is on publications, audio-visual materials, regional conservation educators (two established out of nine proposed), regional conservation education centers (one established out of eight proposed), boys' conservation education camps (three established out of four proposed), teacher training, hunter safety training, and specialized exhibits. Proposed expansion of these programs covers an increase in the distribution of materials and the establishment of all proposed positions and facilities mentioned above.

Education Department

The New York State Education Department has, at present, integrated some degree of conservation education into the science curriculum at all levels, from kindergarten through grade 12. It provides materials for use by schools on Conservation Day. This year it has offered its support to the National Environmental Teach-in planned for April 22. The Education Department, aware of the necessity for new approaches in conservation education, has recently established an Environmental Education Task Force which cuts across

unit lines, in the hope of developing a program which will permeate the entire school program.

Higher Education

Many colleges and universities are involved in programs that deal with environmental issues, both in the classroom and in the community. As an example, the State University of New York at Albany has developed an experimental course called the Environmental Forum and has developed the first television course in the area of environmental studies. The Department of Atmospheric Sciences and the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center at the State University of New York at Albany has carried out research and educational programs for several years. Similarly, the Extension Department of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University has been using the Forestry Experiment Station at Arnot Forest to provide teacher training workshops. Elsewhere in higher education in our state there is evidence that professional and technical colleges and schools directly in the field are becoming more aware of their responsibilities in this area.

Regional Level

At the regional and local levels, some of the existing programs in conservation education are sponsored by citizen groups such as ACTION for Preservation

and Conservation of the North Shore of Long Island, the Long Island Environmental Council, SCOPE (a cooperative effort serving Suffolk County), and the Susquehanna Conservation Council (Broome County). Individual schools have developed interesting and innovative courses in environmental problems. The Heldeberg Workshop in Voorheesville is a unique approach in education, already incorporating new techniques in teaching ecology and conservation to reach all age levels, both in the classroom and in their outdoor center.

In summary, the Commission has been informed of the many approaches to conservation education that exist in the State. Facilities for outdoor education for teachers and students are available in some areas of the State; resource material and personnel can be obtained through many interested groups both public and private. The overall impression is that good things are being done, but there is no uniform excellence of program that reaches all parts of the State and all types of school systems. Nor can we be sure that the emphasis in the existing activities is on the new concept of conservation education which includes the total environment.

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE EXISTING PROGRAMS

Despite the limited time available to undertake its study, the Commission feels that it has stimulated a great deal of interest and has received a wide sampling of public and private opinions among both those knowledgeable in the fields of conservation, ecology, and education, and those interested in preserving their environment. Hearings were held in Niagara Falls on January 15, 1970, in Stony Brook on January 22, in Binghamton on February 5, in New York City on February 12, and in Albany on February 19. Altogether, 114 statements were presented at these hearings. As previously indicated, many high school and college students attended and participated in the hearings. Some general observations may be made.

Urgency

First of all, the theme of urgency in regard to the crisis in our environment was repeatedly stressed. Many of the participants, both young and old, felt that there was not enough time to effect change through traditional educational methods. Crash programs were recommended, with an emphasis on action oriented programs.

Secondly, the consensus of the opinions and observations gathered was that conservation education has not been adequately developed in New York State, despite some good individual programs. Efforts in the field have been fragmentary and some have been oriented toward what are considered as outmoded ideas of conservation.

Fragmentation

Third, many participants felt that any new approach in conservation education must stress the importance of changing present value systems. In order to gain the greater good of a world still habitable, new generations must be instilled with the desire to forego many of the things which have previously been considered highly desirable. They must learn that man is responsible for his environment. Adult value systems, too, were considered -- the consumer will have to pay for the fight to save our environment. Only through intensive educational means and motivation can this value orientation be produced. The Commission was reminded that

Values

"the man who wants to change the world must first change himself"

- from the 1968 Mohonk Consultations with International Students sponsored by The Mohonk Trust.

Many specific recommendations were offered to lift conservation education in New York State to the high level deemed necessary for the present critical situation. The recommendations were varied and sometimes contradictory.

One group of suggestions dealt with the responsibility for conservation education. Some speakers felt that the State Education Department should have sole responsibility for developing a program of environmental education and that a new unit should be created within the Department for this purpose. Others believed that the Conservation Department must continue to play an important role. Some urged the creation of a new central agency to coordinate all efforts in conservation education. Still others expressed the view that the colleges and universities should make the major thrust in environmental education.

Responsibility

A second group of suggestions, by far the largest in number, was concerned with broad approaches to conservation education. Many speakers felt that some type of conservation education program should be mandated at all levels. There was no agreement, however, as to

Approaches

which would be better, a separate, interdisciplinary course in conservation or the teaching of conservation within existing courses. Other speakers felt that curriculum changes should be made but that conservation education should not be mandated. Those who expressed this view urged the utilization of local potential for administration and curriculum development.

Many speakers stressed the need for immediate action directed primarily at adults. They urged a Statewide program of public seminars, run by a combination of local government and schools, using State personnel as consultants. They urged a multi-media approach, using television, radio, newspapers, and magazines.

Yet, other persons attending these hearings suggested that a research program should be instituted to study efforts being made elsewhere in this field, to establish pilot programs, to find out how young people become concerned about environmental issues, and to evaluate more accurately the outcomes of existing programs.

The Commission's attention was directed to pending Federal legislation which would assist states

in conservation education by ending the fragmentation of efforts in this field, establish a nationwide policy of financial support, and coordinate the activities at other levels of government. A few speakers urged that colleges establish majors in Environmental Quality and Outdoor Education and that graduate degrees in Ecology should be awarded. Many emphasized the need to seek and encourage innovative approaches to conservation education.

Course Content

A third group of suggestions had to do with the content of courses or units in conservation education. Here, the major emphasis was on broadening the concept of conservation, even replacing the term "conservation education" with the term "environmental education". Some urged that the stress be placed on human environments, on the ecology of the city, on population control, on consumer education, or on lobbying for legislation.

Some of the speakers suggested that outdoor education should be provided to all students at all levels. The importance of localizing conservation education was brought out, and the suggestion was made that consultants visit each school district and educational

setting to diagnose and prescribe materials applicable to each situation. A few speakers felt strongly that the aesthetic qualities of conservation must receive attention.

If there was agreement on any recommendation, it was that the emphasis in conservation education must be on values and attitudes, the values and attitudes which will result in the maintenance and improvement of environmental quality.

Resources and Facilities

A fourth group of suggestions made at the hearings dealt with the resources and facilities for conservation education. Some speakers felt that the State should provide funds for materials, and matching funds to encourage school districts to acquire land for outdoor education programs.

Many speakers addressed their remarks to the need for additional Conservation Department centers like the Rogers Center at Sherburne. Some suggested that every State park, State forest, and large campsite should be a conservation education center, staffed with a full-time conservation educator. Still others recommended that Boards of Cooperative Educational

Services be utilized to operate environmental centers. The suggestion was also made that outdoor workshops could be created on existing school grounds where land acquisition is a problem, and that school plants should reflect model environmental qualities.

The large number of publications and audio-visual materials now available from a variety of sources led to the suggestion that a clearinghouse or information center should be established. Also, some speakers felt that library resources in environmental problems must be improved and updated.

In regard to personnel, the suggestion was made that the community colleges assign a staff member to help with local problems in conservation education and that county environmental councils and county naturalists be encouraged.

A fifth and final group of suggestions centered around conservation education for teachers. Some felt that two or three courses in environmental education, including a field course, should be required of all beginning teachers. Others felt that certification requirements should be established for a new interdisciplinary specialty in environmental education.

Teacher Education

A great variety of recommendations was made concerning the in-service education of teachers. Some speakers urged that all teachers be required to attend conservation workshops. Others suggested that these workshops be available to all teachers on an optional basis. Still others maintained that conservation workshops be limited to teachers of science and other fields concerned with environmental problems.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommends that an agency be established to coordinate the use of existing resources and facilities for conservation education. An impressive variety of materials is available, and many organizations have special facilities at their disposal. However, these resources are not being effectively utilized because there is no single agency equipped to assist schools in finding appropriate publications, audio-visual materials, and outdoor laboratories, and to help arrange for transportation.

In making this recommendation, the Commission affirms its belief that conservation education must be concerned with the total human environment. Indoor education must be balanced by outdoor education. Conservation education cannot be effective if it is confined to the classroom.

The short period during which the Commission has been in existence has not been characterized entirely by study and discussion. As noted earlier, the State Education Department has already established an Environmental Education Task Force to upgrade environmental education in elementary and secondary schools, and the Conservation

Department has outlined its plans to create additional facilities and positions for conservation education. The Education Department has indicated its intention of developing new conservation education materials aimed at various grade levels for distribution during the 1970-71 school year, and it is considering a crash program of in-service teacher orientations to acquaint all teachers with ways in which they can aid the cause of conservation education. The Conservation Department has also been active in the field of in-service education for teachers.

The Commission believes that the following questions have yet to be answered:

1) Shall conservation education be mandated in the curriculum of New York State Schools?

2) Shall separate courses of study in conservation be established at all levels, from kindergarten through grade 12?

3) What aspects of conservation education should be stressed in required or elective courses?

4) Shall teacher certification requirements be changed to include conservation education?

5) Shall those presently teaching be required to take in-service training in this field?

6) What are the best means of producing the change in value patterns necessary to solve today's environmental problems?

7) What are the best means of reaching urban students with environmental studies?

8) What are the best means of reaching the adults in the community with new concepts in environmental quality?

9) Are special efforts needed to provide conservation education for girls?

10) How can the concern of youth and their desire for prompt action be most effectively utilized in developing programs of conservation education?

11) What are the factors which may inhibit the development of conservation education programs?

Further study is required before the Commission can make additional recommendations to the Governor and the Members of the Legislature. The questions listed above indicate the directions which this study will take. The Commission plans to visit the sites of proposed conservation education centers, such as the Caumsett site; to investigate the conservation education programs of other states and nations; to expand its advisory committee to include students; and to take whatever steps are necessary to resolve the issues which have been isolated. The Commission is committed to action in finding positive, innovative approaches to conservation education so that each generation to come may inherit a more livable environment.

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Temporary State Commission on Youth Education in Conservation

STATE OF NEW YORK

976

1969-1970 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

(Prefiled)

January 8, 1969

Introduced by Mr. B. C. SMITH—read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Finance

AN ACT

Creating a temporary state commission to make a study of the teaching of the principles of conservation in New York state and to make recommendations relating thereto and making an appropriation for the expenses of such commission

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. A temporary state commission is hereby created to be known as the temporary state commission on Youth Education in Conservation. The commission shall make a study of the current program for teaching the principles of conservation in New York state and to make recommendations for the extension and development of such programs.

§ 2. The commission hereby created shall consist of eleven citizens of the state, of whom three shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate, three by the speaker of the assembly and three to be appointed by the governor, and the commissioner of education and the commissioner of conservation. Such members of the commission shall serve at the pleasure of the officer making the appointment. The commission shall have the power to elect from its members, a chairman, vice-chairman and a secretary. Vacancies in the membership of the commission and among its officers shall be filled in the manner provided for original appointments.

§ 3. The commission may employ and at pleasure remove such personnel as it may deem necessary for the performance of its function and fix their compensation within the amounts made available by appropriation therefor.

§ 4. The commission may meet within and without the state, hold public or private hearings, and shall have all the powers of a legislative committee pursuant to the legislative law.

§ 5. The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties hereunder.

§ 6. The commission may request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission or agency of the state or any political subdivision thereof such facilities, assistance and data as it deems necessary or desirable to carry out properly its powers and duties hereunder.

§ 7. The commission shall make reports to the governor and the legislature on the progress of its work not later than March thirty-first, nineteen hundred seventy. It shall include in its reports such recommendations for revision, modernization and simplification of the Education Law and Conservation Law as it may deem necessary or desirable.

§ 8. The sum of fifty thousand dollars ($50,000), or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated from any moneys in the state treasury in the general fund to the credit of the state purposes fund, not otherwise appropriated, and made immediately available to the temporary state commission for its expenses, including personal service, in carrying out the provisions of this act. Such moneys shall be payable out of the state treasury on the audit and warrant of the comptroller on vouchers certified or approved by the chairman or vice-chairman of the commission or by an officer or employee of the commission designated by the chairman.

§ 9. The provisions of this act shall continue in full force and effect until March thirty-first, nineteen hundred seventy.

§ 10. This act shall take effect immediately.

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State of New York

TEMPORARY STATE COMMISSION

ON

YOUTH EDUCATION IN CONSERVATION

N.Y.S. SENATOR BERNARD C. SMITH, Chairman